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Comments to MMS on Proposed Rule Changes to 30 CFR Part 250, Subpart O – Training

Reference Meeting: MMS Workshop
Houston, Texas
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RPT

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Comments made as follows:

- 1) There are a number of aspects of rules that do not adequately address the relationship between the MMS and contractors. The only statement by the MMS is that the Lessee is responsible for contractor actions on the lease. Are Lessees required to assess all contractor plans or will the MMS?
- 2) Would the MMS consider interactive computer based testing at a facility in lieu of on site testing where by the MMS could provide a test CD. The tested individual would return the CD that contains the test results to the MMS for evaluation.
- 3) Testing should be based on conditions that test the knowledge of solving a problem (particularly with well control) and not on knowledge of a company's training program or on regulations. Knowing the training program or just knowing the regulations does not take the place of experience in the field.
- 4) Relative to testing and correctness of answers – examples can be cited where field inspectors have misinterpreted the current regulations and issued INCs. Later, the lessee has had the INC rescinded. If the field testing is based on an operator's particular training program, or even on regulations, there is concern over the MMS representatives working knowledge of the material and the problems associated with a perceived incorrect answer.
- 5) There needs to be assurance, to lessees, that inspectors or MMS representatives have been adequately trained on regulations, testing, auditing and interviewing and on company specific training programs.
- 6) Who pays for "hands-on" testing – Operator or Contractor? This is an expensive method of evaluation and can have considerable impact on already strained administrative budgets of operators and contractors. If this option is really embraced by the MMS then the MMS should consider bearing the cost of the "hands-on" testing.

7) The stated training plan development time of 2.2 hours is a gross understatement. A restatement of the plan components is noted below:

TRAINING PLAN CONTENTS

- Procedures for evaluating contractors
- Training requirements by employee
- Audit procedures
- Procedures to maintain and verify skills of employees
- Training in operations procedures, welding, hot tapping, safe work and emergency response
- Record keeping and documentation procedures

Based on the above, companies will likely have to increase staff to develop and manage these plans, particularly contractors. There are many small contractors that do not have the internal resources for development and management of safety systems. The point is that there has been a misstatement of the economic impact of the proposed rules.

8) The MMS communicated in the workshop that they would not be "turning back time". The interpretation of such a statement, combined with remarks of upper level MMS support, left me with the impression that new rules would go on in some fashion irregardless of comment or objection. There has not been a clear communication of the precedent which requires a change in the rules or that the proposed methodology would necessarily produce a better result than what is currently in force. Why not attempt a voluntary participation in the new rule process while allowing lessees to continue in the present methods. Or, the drilling component of OCS activity could begin to employ SEMP type measures and could begin to transition into a different system. There is no justification for making the sweeping changes to the present system.